A new automated ticketing system goes for a test-drive

By BRUCE TOBIN,
transport reporter

Melbourne's new automated ticketing system for trains, trams and buses is now on the streets for final testing before it is phased in from early next year.

A test tram, fitted with the new ticket vending machines and validating machines, has started trials of the new Metcard system.

The trials will check that the machines are not affected by vibration, voltage malfunction or electromagnetic interference.

The vending machines, developed during the past 12 months, have been designed with the help of 40 community groups to ensure the final design can be used by the disabled, elderly and school children.

The coin-operated machines, which carry about 2000 Metcard tickets, will be in the middle of the tram. Passengers will board through the centre doors and buy their tickets, which will be automatically validated.

Passengers holding tickets will be able to validate their Metcard, with the magnetic stripe, at four machines on the tram. There will be six validating machines on articulated trams.

The Minister for Public Transport, Mr Brown, said the machines would be tested on all tram types.

Automated ticketing will be introduced initially on the Glen Waverley and Alamein train lines, Wattle Park and East Burwood trams, and private buses operating in the eastern corridor.

Coin-operated ticket machines will be installed at smaller train stations, and larger machines that take coins, plastic notes and credit cards will be at busier stations.

The Public Transport Corporation hopes to sell 90 per cent of its Metcard tickets through about 1000 retail outlets. The $100 million automated ticketing system will be progessively introduced across the metropolitan transport system over about 12 months.
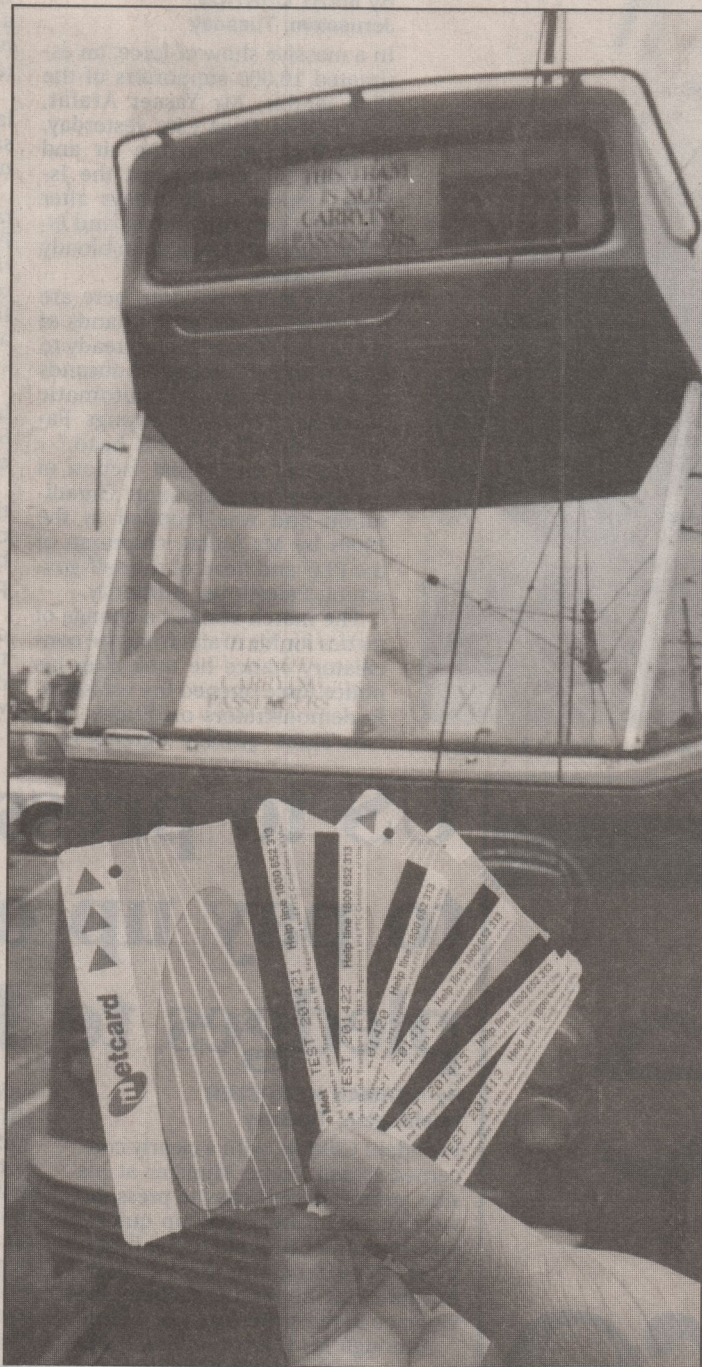
The new Metcard ticketing system is undergoing trials to ensure it is "ready for service" when it is phased in next year.